

The Matrimandir

by Christina Grote ITPI Board Chair

When I close my eyes during meditation I can feel myself back in the Matrimandir, a ten story high golden sphere dedicated to the Universal Mother, conceived by the founder of Auroville, Mira Alfassa, known as the Mother. Designed as a place to concentrate and find one's consciousness, the central chamber is circular, pure white marble, with a ring of columns and a large crystal sphere in the center. A focused beam of light comes down from the top of the structure, illuminating the crystal sphere, and passes through it and out the bottom of the "building" into a marble lotus pond. Due to the generosity of Amber Patel, an extraordinary woman who was there when Michael Murphy lived at the Aurobindo Ashram in the 1950's, we had the privilege of entering this amazing space.



Walking up a spiraling ramp that leads to the central chamber, I felt I was entering a temple both alien and familiar. The silence was deafening and almost palpable. We were led to mats on the floor arranged in a circle around the sphere. As I sat, I could see clouds playing in the light on the floor below the sphere, and some of the ring of people seated around reflected in it. My mind alternated between awed silence and excitement that was hard to contain. "I can't believe they built this!" I kept thinking over and over; and then I had a sense that long ago, in some other place and time, I may have been involved in building something like this.

Surrounding the sphere are twelve "petals" made from red sandstone and bathed in different colored lights. Each "petal" represents one of the powers of the Universal Mother and is given a name, such as generosity, humility and courage. A circular corridor connects the petals. I was lucky enough to be alone in the deep blue petal, Sincerity. After sitting for some time, I got up to look for the source of the light bathing the walls. I couldn't find it as it is hidden below the seating platform. I was reminded of the work of James Turrell, an American artist who creates installations with light, sometimes just diffused color with no edges that one can gaze into like a Ganzfeld effect.



Hearing my breath echoing in the room, I had to explore what toning would sound like, so I started to chant without words. The acoustics are amazing. I had no idea that I could be heard outside the room, but my husband Jim happened to be walking by in the corridor and heard me. I read later that strict silence is to be observed!

I hope to return to the Matrimandir one day, but even if I do not, I believe that I will always be able to experience it again through the deep imprint it left on me and my consciousness.